

Roasted Red Pepper & Garlic Hummus

1 16-20oz can garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained & rinsed

¼ cup lemon juice

½ cup tahini paste*

¼ cup yogurt

3 cloves minced garlic

1 roasted red bell pepper peeled

½ tsp salt

1 Tbsp olive oil

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

2 Tbsp chopped parsley (for garnish)

¼ cup chopped black olives (for garnish)

Roast a red bell pepper under the broiler or on the grill until charred. Place roasted pepper in bowl and cover with plastic wrap to steam for 10 minutes. Peel and de-seed the roasted pepper (or you can purchase a jar of roasted peppers). In a food processor add the garbanzo beans, lemon juice, red pepper, yogurt, garlic, cayenne pepper and salt then blend well for 1 minute. Next add the tahini paste, olive oil and blend well. Transfer hummus to serving dish and garnish with parsley and olives. Serve with pita, crackers or chips. Can be stored in the refrigerator for approximately 1 week.

* Note – If you can't find tahini paste at your grocery store, it can be made from scratch. Using a small food processor or coffee grinder, grind 2 Tbsp sesame seeds until fairly smooth. Add ½ tsp sesame oil and ¼ tsp salt then process until blended. Add ¼ cup lukewarm water and process again.

Light Whole-Wheat Pita Bread

(4 large family-style pitas or 16 individual pitas)

3 cups lukewarm water

1 ½ Tbsp granulated yeast (2 packets)

1 ½ Tbsp Kosher salt

1 cup whole wheat flour

5 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

1. Add yeast and salt to water then stir until dissolved.
2. Mix flour in a large bowl and use a wooden spoon to stir in the wet ingredients. Don't worry about kneading the dough. Just stir enough to incorporate all dry ingredients.
3. Cover with towel and let rise at room temperature for approximately 2 hours. Dough can be used immediately after the initial rise or refrigerated for up to 14 days.
4. 20 minutes before baking, preheat oven with baking stone to 500 degrees F. Pitas can also be baked on the grill. Just preheat baking stone on grill with all burners set to high.
5. Dust outer surface of dough with flour and divide based on how many pitas you are making.
6. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough 1/8 inch thick (pita will not puff and create the pocket if it's too thick).
7. Place pita on pizza peel lightly dusted with whole wheat flour. Slide pita onto the hot baking stone and bake for 5-7 minutes, until lightly browned and puffed.

Recipe can be found in *Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day* by Jeff Hertzberg, M.D. and Zoe Francois. I would highly recommend this cookbook for the beginner baker. No special equipment is required in terms of mixing/kneading the dough . . . just a large mixing bowl and wooden spoon. For baking all you need is a baking stone, loaf pans and iron skillet to enjoy a wide variety of homemade breads and flatbreads. Recipes are very versatile in terms of making sandwich bread, pitas, naan, pizza/calzones, etc from the same basic dough. Dough can also be prepared in advance then refrigerated for a week or more before baking.

Red Bell Pepper Coulis (sauce for fried green tomatoes)

3-4 Tbsp olive oil
3 sweet red bell peppers, seeded and cut into large pieces
1 onion, chopped
1 tsp chopped garlic
1 sprig fresh thyme or ¼ tsp dried thyme
5 fresh basil leaves
2 cups chicken stock
¼ cup white wine or white wine vinegar
2 Tbsp sugar
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper

Saute peppers, onions and garlic in olive oil over medium heat until soft, about 15 minutes. Add thyme, basil leaves, chicken stock, white wine, sugar, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Puree in food processor or blender and season to taste.

Fried Green Tomatoes

3 large green tomatoes, sliced
½ cup sourdough starter + 1 Tbsp water*
1 cup cornmeal mix
oil for frying
crumbled feta cheese

Dredge tomato slices in sourdough mixture and then coat with cornmeal mix. Deep fry at 350 degrees for 3 to 4 minutes. Drain on paper towels. Serve tomato slices on plates topped with red bell pepper coulis and crumbled feta cheese.

* Note – Recipe for sourdough starter can be found in *Nancy Silverton's Breads from the La Brea Bakery*.